

Feelings, Lines, Colors

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To Ruth,
Regards,
Alma
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Feelings, Lines, Colors

by E. Alma Flagg

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Lines

Lines, lines, lines.
Tell me the meaning if you understand,
Make it as clear as the veins in my hand.

Lines, lines, lines.
You've never seen one, so scholars would say,
Not if you looked all the night and the day.
Series of dots or a thin kind of mark -
Wings of the morning! and minds are still dark.

Lines in the figures of young: strong, and straight;
Lines in the faces of old: wise, and great;
Lines in the music that lifts up a soul,
Lines in a tapestry making life whole.

Gas-lines and clothes-lines and fishing lines, too -
Please read my verses, these lines are for you.

Students' Cry

What do you want ?
An education !
What for ?
Liberation !

Of long ago and far away
Is not enough for us
And those who only teach the past
Have really missed the bus.

Some teachers do not like us if
We're brown or if we're black;
They think that we are stupid, that
Our place is in the back.

We ask a lot of questions, for
We want a better life,
And learning should equip us
To compete in daily strife.

We're handcuffed by our ignorance
And burdened by disease,
While hatred and despair combine
To kill us by degrees.

What do you want ?
An education !
What for ?
Liberation !

Disappointment in Summer

Daddy, stop the car !
Don't go so far !
Another swim club, and we can't go?
Then where is a swim club for us?
They chlorine the pool
And we're healthy, I know,
So why should they put up a fuss?

Bicentennial Black Query

For two hundred years
This country has been free.
But what about me,
What about me, what about me ?

You absorbed my toil
At no cost a bank could see.
Now, what about me,
What about me, what about me ?

Our laws assure each man
His life and liberty.
But what about me,
What about me, what about me ?

Men hope for jobs and houses
And a better life to see.
But what about me,
What about me, what about me ?

"When in the course of human events ...".
The words are clear to me,
And I am as American
As anyone I see.

I've helped build this America
"From sea to shining sea."
So I shall share her greater gifts,
And others, black like me.

I shall be moving toward that goal,
No time for such a plea
As "What about me,
What about me, what about me ?"

Seeing a New Sister

Baby sister doesn't know
What's going on at all;
How will I ever play with her?
She is so soft and small.

How can I even talk to her?
She only sleeps and sleeps;
But I suppose we'll get along -
They say she's here for keeps.

Baby Sounds

Little sister is a lion
Roaring on the hour,
Yet she's smiling all the while,
So we don't fear her power.

Little sister is a birdie,
She can chirp and tweet;
I have learned to understand her -
Really, she is sweet.

The Merry-Go-Round

The merry-go-round is great!
It spins at a dizzying rate.
Hold on to the bar,
You can't tell where you are.
The merry-go-round is great!

The merry-go-round is fun!
It goes when you give it a run.
Don't open your eyes
For the scenery flies.
The merry-go-round is fun!

Hoops

Hoops of red and hoops of blue -
Yellow hoops are spinning, too.
Folks of every shape and age
Have their hoops, for it's the rage.
Jumping, whirling, or gyrating,
Hula dancers emulating,
Little people are the best -
Oldsters soon are forced to rest.

Hoops Again

I love to swing my hula hoop,
Around and 'round it goes;
I swing until I cannot count,
So high the number grows.

The children spin them all around,
On arms and overhead;
All sizes and all colors whirl,
The orange, green, and red.

The grown-ups looking shake their heads,
They envy us, you know;
On them a hoop falls right away,
They cannot make it go.

Halloween

Bells that ring and no one's there,
Laughter sounding through the air,
Bundles dropping on the porch,
Witch who glides with lighted torch,
Cats, bats, pumpkins - all these mean
It's the night of Halloween.

To the Snowman

Snowman, Snowman, white and cold,
How much dinner can you hold?
Would you like a bowl of soup?
Will you join our fireside group?

"Never, never. I must stay
In the yard where children play."

Snowman, you will never age,
Or be locked up in a cage.
You will always give us fun
Till you last escape the sun.

Travelers at Home

The sofa is a mountain,
A tunnel is behind it;
There's hidden treasure near
If only we can find it.

You crawl beneath the table,
I'll wriggle through the chair;
Perhaps a geiger-counter
Will show us something rare.

Don't knock the fruit bowl over
Or cause a lamp to fall -
Hurrah! here's peanut candy!
Let's rest and eat it all.

Open House

Our parents had a party
And the folks brought children, too;
We kept it very lively
In the special way we do.

Of course, we liked the pictures
Showing trips that we had made
To beaches, farms, and buildings
Where there's history on parade.

We took the kids to our rooms
Where we played our records through,
And then rejoined the grownups
Seeking other things to do.

We had our punch and cookies
As we sat, polite, on chairs;
We sampled mints and nut-meats
And the fruit in modest shares.

One climbed beneath a table
To eat potato chips
All heaped into a napkin -
Down there he'd make no slips.

We had rides in the basement,
No parents in the way,
And no one was a baby
If he got bumped in the play.

We had such fun and frolic
That we both could scarcely creep!
Quick bath, lights out, keep covered -
How fast we went to sleep!

Being a Patient

It isn't so bad if you're not very sick,
Sometimes you might say that it's fun;
I just had a fever that didn't make sense
And had to rest till it was done.

The medicine wasn't as bad as you think,
In fact it was pleasant to take;
Folks kept peeping in every minute or so
To see whether I was awake.

And my little sister played she was a nurse
With rocking chair close to my bed;
She brought me whatever I asked her to bring
And put her soft hand on my head.

So if you'd enjoy seeing everyone 'round
And making things really go "click,"
Then just be a patient in bed for a day,
But, mind you, don't get very sick!

Current Romance

Love is corny now, they say,
There's no time for that today;
I won't bore you with emoting,
But will list some facts worth noting.
You're the one for whom I care
And we'd make a handsome pair;
All the books you like I've read
And have danced the steps you led.
While you tend the microscope,
With the slide-rule I can cope,
And equations that you balance
I will test with measured talents.
Whether microscopic tissue
Or far galaxy the issue,
Or with gripping novel curled,
We can surely change the world.

Tomato Worm

On my tomato plant
Eating, blending, eating: fat !
Down ! blend with earth.

Overage of Oaks

My little yard has excess oak trees now,
And I cannot uproot them with my strength.
I saw the fuzzy squirrels when they dug
And left their food supply for leaner days.
O lucky squirrels that you had no need,
And hapless I with oaks I do not want!

On Edward I. Pfeffer

Gone.
He's gone.
Left us here.
Gone the warm smile,
Gone the twinkling eyes,
And the conversation,
Snatches of humor gone, too -
Edward Israel Pfeffer.
Father and grandfather,
Husband and help-mate,
Teacher, student,
Loving and
Greatly
Loved.

Gratefully Remembering John Fitzgerald Kennedy

John Fitzgerald Kennedy
Born: May 29, 1917 to loving parents
possessed of noble faith, boundless
energy, and high aspirations.
Lived: with high regard for family,
with devotion to God and country,
with concern for his fellowman.
Our leader loved his people well - America!
It was his joy to know them, see them,
touch their hands,
To look into their eyes, exchanging
smiles and quips,
To walk on this, the best for us,
indeed, of lands;
He would not be dissuaded from the fateful tour
That robbed us of a strong and vibrant president;
Out, fear! for courage was the quality he prized,
Nor with a lesser trait would be content.
The sun was smiling as were countless faces, too,
While love and joy gave all about a festive glow,
Till blind hate, hidden from the light,
with timeless speed,
Struck down our leader, dealt us all a deadly blow.
The Lady Bird to Jacqueline Kennedy expressed
A woman's heartache that no words can well convey,
While Lyndon, suddenly the Chief, gave sympathy
To other Kennedys, bereft that awful day.
The gallant Jacqueline her little children led
Through all the trying hours of ceremonies, rites;
She bore her grief unflinching, helping others bear
And lit the flame eternal which our memories lights.
John Fitzgerald Kennedy -
We shall remember him.
As student and writer who gave deep thought
To the cost, always dear, at which
freedom was bought -
We shall remember him!

As sailor and officer, seeing the need
 For action that gave personal safety no heed -
 We shall remember him!
 As athlete, promoter of vigor and health,
 Who knew that peak fitness is part of our wealth -
 We shall remember him!
 As husband and father, both loving and true,
 Whose gestures included the old and the new -
 We shall remember him!
 As man, soul allied with susceptible frame
 Where physical torment would often lay claim -
 We shall remember him!
 As President, Chieftain in calm or in strife
 Who wanted for all of us here the Good Life -
 We shall remember him!

"Dear God, take care of your servant,
 John Fitzgerald Kennedy,"
 wrote the newly-widowed mother.
 He is all yours, God, and our course
 must be charted by another.
 He was with us and from his life
 we should have learned
 Of courage, kindness, honor, strength,
 restraint, and pride,
 To keep us on the path, renew our common faith
 In those ideals he cherished till the day he died.
 Dear God, how fortunate we were to know this man,
 And having him as Chief how richly were we blest;
 Do, now, thou, strengthen us in high
 and pure intent
 So that thy servant may enjoy his well-earned rest.

John Fitzgerald Kennedy died young -
 But first, he lived.
 Thank God, he lived!

(Spoken by Mr. Dean Cetrulo at a concert of the
 Bloomfield Symphony Orchestra, February 1964)

Cut Down in a Troubled Land (Robert F. Kennedy)

While Fortune smiled and people cheered,
 While workers knew their jobs well done,
 While hopes were high for brighter days-
 A shadow came.

In all the glory of his youth,
 In all the strength of active frame,
 In all the wisdom dearly bought-
 A champion fell.

O cruel dark of human heart,
 O harsh malfunction of a mind,
 O hand that takes and cannot give-
 Why should it be?

My country, find your way to love,
 My country, find your way to peace,
 My country, work and help and build-
 Or we shall end.

To a Guinea Pig

Ho, there! Nibbler, brown and white,
With your dark eyes shining bright,
Changing quickly black to red
As you turn your little head.

Let me smooth your silky coat,
Hold you warm against my throat,
Hear you whistle, grunt, and squeal
As you seek another meal.

Carrots, lettuce on the shelf,
These you turn into yourself;
Scamper down the ramp in glee,
Munch your toast in privacy.

Visiting Squirrel

In a coat of grayish brown
From the tree he scampers down,
Gives his tail a sudden shake,
Watches every move I make.

Finding crumbs that he enjoys,
Seeing that I make no noise,
Coming close to find a treat -
All I feed him he will eat.

Bubbles

A bubble-bath is so much fun,
Especially when the scrubbing's done !
I stir and stir with all my might
Until I'm lost in mounds of white.

I make a sparkling mountain peak
And whip the suds when they are weak;
But then I hear my brother shout,
"Your time is up - come on - get out !"

March Mood

I want to fly with my own wings,
For something in me sings and sings;
I stretch my arms up to the sky
And feel myself go very high
Into the blue-ness, clear and bright
Where cotton clouds are dazzling white.

Winds of March

"Hoo-hoo, hoo-hoo," I hear you say;
You roar and whistle all the day.
Around the roof and shutters bleak
You roughly play at hide-and-seek.
Our kites enjoy your milder gift
And tug away because you lift.
What hurts you that you howl so?
When you leave us, where do you go?

A Rainy Day

Drip, dripping rain !
Splash on the pane !
Beat on the tile,
Sing all the while !
Sing a song of air refreshed, inspiring,
Sing your way back to the sea, untiring.

Drip by the hour,
Bless with your shower
Each house and tree,
Park, factory -
Bathe the world with wave on wave descending,
Underneath your cloud our spirits mending.

At the Beach

We spread our blanket on the sand
With lunch and toys and such,
And in the waves we splashed about,
Enjoying it so much.

We sat down then to sun ourselves
And watch each pounding wave;
To our surprise we quickly found
How wildly waves behave.

We were relaxing drowsily,
Face to the sun to thank it,
When with a mighty splash a wave
Came lapping 'round our blanket.

Joy in Running

Running is wonderful,
Gives such a thrill,
Whether it's level or
Climbing a hill.

Breathing so deeply you
Tingle all through,
Lips have a smile and your
Fingertips, too.

All through your being there's
Joy you can't tell -
How can you walk when you're
Feeling so well ?

On the Stairs

When I come down the stairs,
If Daddy says a word,
It's sure to be this, without fail,
"Here comes the thundering herd !"

My mommy says to walk,
My gram says not to fall;
Why don't they know that walking down
Is just no fun at all ?

The carpet's loose sometimes
And Daddy has to tack it;
My mom would love to take it up,
But then, I'd make more racket.

Waiting

I often say I cannot wait
Until my birthday comes,
Or wait for Christmas with its joys
Of dolls and games and drums;
I think I cannot wait for spring
Through winter's icy spell;
Vacation in the summertime
Seems too far off to tell.

Yet wait is what I have to do -
Somehow the weeks go by,
At each bright day brings special treats,
Scarce leaving time to sigh.
The birthdays and the holidays
Roll 'round as sure as fate,
And I'm surprised to recollect
I said I couldn't wait.

Fountain Moved

Years of my youth,
Long walks to the library,
Short stops in the five-and-ten.
Massive gray building,
Busy street corner,
Greatest street ever.
There was the fountain,
Endless clear water
For all thirsty travelers...
Cool, soothing water,
Treating my being
With refreshment through and through...
New buildings there now,
Old ones demolished -
Feet, take this body
To the Museum garden.
There is our fountain !

Three Centuries, New Jersey

Where Verrazano sailed along the coast,
Where Hudson sensed the depths of Newark Bay,
Where Lenni Lenape or Delaware
With turkey, turtle, wolf as emblem fair,
Went farming, hunting, fishing day by day,
Hail, now, New Jersey! state of which we boast.

Cornelius Mey and Peter Minuit
Brought settlers who would till the verdant land,
Who lived through wars that burdened goodly life
Till England was victorious in the strife
And peace did prosper all on soil and sand
To build a state and to continue it.

The names of others spring from history's page -
Of Carteret and Berkeley we should know,
In Boyden, Kilmer, Roebling see the worth,
In Washington whose soldiers tramped our earth,
In Baxters, Goulds, and Morrows all who show
There is no color-line on merit's stage.

Their farms and forests bade New Jersey men
To make the kindly growing season pay,
While fisheries and quarries added much
To make a record others could not touch,
And beaches gave a welcome place to play
Or rest before commencing work again.

The laboratories and the factories
Are seats of progress and production, too -
New Jersey meets some very pressing needs
Of neighbors near and far. Industry feeds
On textiles, metals, compounds old and new,
Producing parts to send across the seas.

To serve the purpose that has made her great,
To build the Jersey that we view with pride,
Insurance, commerce, banks have done their part,
Museums, libraries, music and art,
With interest and talent side by side,
Our people have built up the Garden State.

The motto "Liberty and Prosperity" -
Beloved by people yellow, white, and black
In church and court, in offices and homes -
Lives in a Jerseyan though far he roams.
The clock of progress will not be turned back,
So, on, New Jersey! peace, fraternity!

Newark Is Home

What is a city and what is a home ?
What makes each more than a place ?
Skyscrapers stretching to dizzying heights ?
Vehicles bent on a race ?
Elegant Hepplewhite gracing a room ?
Curtains resplendent in lace ?

Shall we consider what makes each a fact ?
Can we reach that which is real ?
There is no building that fulfills our quest,
No car that shows what we feel,
Furniture neither that answers our need,
Fabric nor colors that heal.

Cities are made by people who live
Working and playing in turn,
Those who together in programs unite,
Focused on common concern:
Beauty, good health, and a bountiful life,
Peace and goodwill here to learn.

Homes are created by people who love;
Caring pervades every space;
Helping or listening or just being there
Sharing the family place;
Summoning memories out of the past
Memories time can't erase.

Newark is my city, and in it my home,
Here I developed through years,
Seeing dear loved ones move out of this life,
Saying farewell through my tears,
Seeing newcomers arrive on the scene,
Banishing weakness and fears.

City, O city, I call you my own -
Blood, sweat, and tears make it true !
Friendships and good times are part of the whole,
With troubles and struggles no few.
People and purposes always in flux -
Here, Newark, I'm staying with you.

For reading,
discussing,
typing, lettering,
thinking,
arranging -
sincere thanks
go to
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